

AIR CELEBRATES THE AMERICAN DREAM

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Imagine being able to take your

children or grandchildren to a Hollywood blockbuster that tells the story of a great American business success, celebrates entrepreneurial values, isn't woke, and includes only a little profanity.

Air — the story of how underdog shoe company Nike landed Michael Jordan's revolutionary endorsement of the "Air Jordan" shoe — is exactly that. The Jordan shoe changed fashion and completely realigned how athletes benefit from products they associate with. It's still one of the most successful consumer products ever.

Hollywood is fresh from observing how Tom Cruise's *Top Gun: Maverick* broke box-office records a year ago and grossed over \$1 billion worldwide. Though it will still produce many woke films, Hollywood may have decided that it has to pay for its frequent box-office losses by producing entertainment that people actually want to shell out money for.

Nor is *Top Gun: Maverick* alone in bringing in theatergoers who want to see something other than the latest Marvel-superhero mashup.

Box Office Mojo reports that *His Only Son*, a Bible-based movie produced by Angel Studios with a production budget of only \$250,000, took in more than \$11 million this past weekend.

The movie takes its inspiration from Genesis 22, which recounts God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. A mere 18 verses from Genesis have become the basis of a smash feature film, auguring well for future such efforts.

Look for another film to score similarly surprising box-office numbers later this year, when *Reagan*, a biography of the late president starring Dennis Quaid, hits theaters.

It's hard to overestimate just how much moviemakers in Hollywood needed the success of *Top Gun: Maverick* in the wake of Covid. It brought older moviegoers back into theaters in a way that hadn't happened in years.

At a February lunch to honor this year's Oscar nominees, director Steven Spielberg approached Tom Cruise and

told him, “You saved Hollywood’s ass and you might have saved theatrical distribution.” After Cruise blushed, Spielberg added, “Seriously, *Top Gun: Maverick* might have saved the entire theatrical industry.”

Cruise was soon surrounded by other fawning celebrities, and everyone in Hollywood who wasn’t there watched the video of the Spielberg exchange.

Air, which is already doing well at the box office, follows Nike recruiters who decide to entice Michael Jordan, fresh out of a championship college-basketball career and headed for the NBA, to become the face of a new line of Nike shoes. Facing pit-bull competition from rivals Adidas and Converse, they pull out all the stops to make it happen.

The film stars Matt Damon as a Nike recruiter and Ben Affleck as Nike CEO Phil Knight. Both men were raised in solidly liberal Massachusetts and have backed only liberal candidates in their careers, but in this film, they’ve produced a celebration of American ingenuity and the power of visionary thinking and individual striving.

At every key juncture in the story, the movie showcases one of the founding principles that Nike’s Phil Knight said should embody the company. They include, “Your job isn’t done until it’s done” and, “Perfect results count — not a perfect process. Break the rules: fight the law.”

Although the movie acknowledges the sacrifices that driven people pay in pursuing their dreams, in its postscript it recounts how everyone who worked on the Air Jordan shoe went on to great acclaim and success.

Go. See. This. Film.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Euy4Yu6B3nU&t=128s>

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